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RUEHNCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA PRIORITY 2905
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 003178

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TAGS: PGOV PTER SNAR NP

SUBJECT: SECURITY FORCES IN EASTERN NEPAL: MAOISTS HAVE TO EARN TRUST

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

¶1. (C) In separate meetings on December 3, Nepal Army (NA) and Nepal Police (NP) contacts in Sunsari District in south-eastern Nepal told Emboff that the Maoists had to earn the trust of the public for the peace process to succeed. An NA Major told emboff that some soldiers believed the NA did not have the support of the civilian political leadership, and worried that the political leadership might turn its back on the NA if something went wrong. He added that the NA did not have supply problems or command and control issues and felt comfortable in the district. An NP Sub-Inspector confirmed that the Maoists had attempted to establish joint patrols with the NP in the district, but that he and other police officials had declined. The biggest problem at the border crossing from India into Nepal was illegal drugs smuggling.

Maoists Need to Earn Trust

¶2. (C) In separate meetings on December 3, NA Major Purushottam KC, Commander of the unit guarding the Koshi Tappu National Wildlife Reserve in Sunsari District, and NP Sub-Inspector Dhan Bahadur Rajbanshi, Officer-In-Charge of the police post at the Koshi River Barrage in Sunsari, told Emboff that the Maoists needed to earn the trust of the public and the security forces for the peace process to succeed. Major KC was hopeful that such reconciliation would occur, but stressed that such trust-building would take time. He declared, "No one can expect me and my enemy to become friends again overnight." Rajbanshi said he was concerned that the Maoists would not give up violence, but expressed hope that the peace process would bring the Maoists into the mainstream.

NA Needs Civilian Support

¶3. (C) Major KC stated that he and other mid-level officers did not believe that the NA had the full support of the civilian political leadership, even though the NA had fully submitted to civilian control. He worried that if something

bad happened in the NA (such as a soldier committing a flagrant human rights violation), the entire NA would be blamed and the government would not publicly support the NA or might attack the NA in the media itself. KC stressed that there would always be a few bad soldiers in any army. The important thing was that the NA punish wrongdoers. He also expressed concern that the civilian leadership might turn its back on the NA out of political expediency.

Supplies for the NA Are Not a Problem

¶4. (C) Major KC said that the unit at Koshi Tappu did not have any supply problems or command and control issues. He said that the superior officers supported the unit well, and he was in contact with Central Division Headquarters on a regular basis. He told Emboff that the unit was outfitted with Indian Small Arms System (INSAS) rifles but had no firing range for training. However, under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the unit was still permitted to carry out armed patrols throughout the wildlife reserve and around its perimeter.

Nepal Police Deny Maoists, Go After Drugs

¶5. (C) Sub-Inspector Rajbanshi said that Maoist militia had approached him and other officers in the district to propose joint patrols of the area, an offer the NP had consistently rejected. Rajbanshi stated that there had been a Maoist camp (with PLA and militia) located just across the river (about one kilometer) from the NP post, but that it had been disbanded after the CPA was signed. He told Emboff that the NP's primary activity had been to intercept illegal drugs

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coming across the border from India. The Indian border is only 2 kilometers from the police post, which is adjacent to a Nepal Customs office. He said that the biggest drug-addiction problem in the area was abuse of prescription drugs, such as valium. The police at the post had not arrested anyone in the past month, but had counseled and confiscated drugs from a few individuals.

Comment

¶6. (C) The NA and NP in Sunsari District seem cautiously optimistic about the prospects for peace. That said, the Government of Nepal has some work to do to convince the NA's soldiers that the government "has their back." Building such trust will take time and effort. It is noteworthy and welcome news that the NP post at the border is enforcing law and order, even if only on the issue of illegal drugs.

MORIARTY